

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method for communicating information regarding a selected item to a user present at a location of a first retail entity from a second retail entity different from the first retail entity, wherein the selected item is available for purchase at the second retail entity, the method comprising:

while the user remains present at the location of the first retail entity, the second retail entity:

receiving an image directly from an imaging device of the user, wherein the image contains multiple instances of identifying data associated with the selected item ~~as provided by the first retail entity~~;

for each of the multiple instances of identifying data, extracting the identifying data from the image using a data recognition procedure that produces an output;

comparing the output of each of the data recognition procedures to corroborate the identification of the selected item that is obtained from each instance of the identifying data;

using the corroborated identifying data to obtain item information associated with the selected item, ~~wherein the selected item is available for purchase from the second retail entity~~; and

communicating the item information directly from the second retail entity to the imaging device of the user.

2. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, further comprising formatting the item information for output on a visual display of the imaging device when the item information is communicated from the second retail entity to the imaging device.

3. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, further comprising formatting the item information for output on an audio speaker of the imaging device when the item information is communicated from the second retail entity to the imaging device.

4. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the imaging device is a digital camera capable of communicating the image containing the identifying data.

5. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the imaging device is a mobile telephone having a component for capturing an image containing the identifying data.

6. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the imaging device is a portable computing device having a component for capturing an image containing the identifying data.

7. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the method further comprises:

compiling historical data based on a number of times an image has been received from different imaging devices, said image containing identifying data associated with the selected item;

using the historical data to estimate consumer demand for the selected item; and

generating a report that forecasts future purchasing activity for the selected item based on the estimated consumer demand.

8. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the item information comprises rating information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the item information comprises price information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

10. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one instance of the identifying data comprises a universal product code and another instance of the identifying data comprises text.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently amended) A system for communicating information regarding a selected item to a user present at a location of a first retail entity, wherein the system comprises a server operated by a second retail entity that is different than the first retail entity and the selected item is available for purchase at the second retail entity, the server being in communication with an imaging device of the user that is configured to capture an image of identifying data associated with the selected item, the server comprising:

a subsystem configured to receive an image directly from the imaging device of the user, wherein the image contains multiple instances of identifying data associated with the selected item as provided by the first retail entity;

a subsystem configured to extract the identifying data from each of the multiple instances in the image using a data recognition procedure that operates on an instance of the identifying data and produces an output;

a subsystem configured to compare the output of each of the data recognition procedures to corroborate the identification of the selected item that is obtained from each instance of the identifying data;

a subsystem configured to use the corroborated identifying data to obtain item information associated with the selected item, wherein the item information is obtained from at least one resource; and

a subsystem configured to communicate the item information directly to the imaging device of the user while the user remains present at the location of the first retail entity.

13. (Previously presented) The system of Claim 12, wherein the resource is a Web service providing information related to the selected item.

14. (Original) The system of Claim 12, wherein the resource is a database storing information related to the selected item.

15. (Original) The system of Claim 12, wherein the server subsystem that communicates the item information is further configured to communicate the item information in a format that enables generation of an audible signal through a speaker.

16. (Original) The system of Claim 12, wherein the server subsystem that communicates the item information is further configured to communicate the item information in a format that enables generation of a visual output on a display.

17. (Previously presented) The system of Claim 12, wherein the server further comprises a subsystem configured to compile historical data based on a frequency of receipt of images from different imaging devices, said images containing identifying data associated with the selected item, and generate a report that forecasts future purchasing activity for the item based on the estimated consumer demand.

18. (Original) The system of Claim 12, wherein the item information comprises rating information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

19. (Original) The system of Claim 12, wherein the item information comprises price information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

20. (Currently amended) The system of Claim 12, wherein at least one instance of the identifying data comprises a universal product code and another instance of the identifying data comprises text.

21. (Previously presented) The system of Claim 12, wherein the server operated by the second retail entity is at a location remote from the location of the first retail entity.

22. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium having a computer-executable component for communicating item information for a selected item to a user present at a location of a first retail entity, wherein the selected item is available for purchase at a second retail entity that is different than the first retail entity, and wherein the computer-executable component is executed by a server of the second retail entity and communicates the item information by:

receiving an image directly from an imaging device of the user, said image containing multiple instances of identifying data associated with the selected item ~~made available at the location of the first retail entity~~;

for each of the multiple instances of identifying data, extracting the identifying data from the image using a data recognition procedure that produces an output;

comparing the output of each of the data recognition procedures to corroborate the identification of the selected item that is obtained from each instance of the identifying data;

using the corroborated identifying data to obtain item information associated with the selected item; and

communicating the item information directly from the server to the imaging device of the user while the user remains present at the location of the first retail entity.

23. (Previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 22, wherein the computer-executable component communicates the item information in a format that enables an audible output of the item information through a speaker.

24. (Previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 22, wherein the computer-executable component communicates the item information in a format that enables a visual output of the item information on a display.

25. (Previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 22, further comprising a computer-executable component for generating a forecast report, said computer-executable component generating the forecast report by:

compiling historical data based on a frequency of receipt of images from different imaging devices, said images containing identifying data associated with the selected item;

using the historical data to estimate consumer demand for the item; and

generating a report that forecasts future purchasing activity for the item based on the estimated consumer demand.

26. (Previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 22, wherein the item information comprises rating information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

27. (Previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 22, wherein the item information comprises price information for the selected item associated with the identifying data.

28. (Currently amended) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 22, wherein at least one instance of the identifying data comprises a universal product code and another instance of the identifying data comprises text.

29. (Currently amended) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim [[22]] 28, wherein extracting identifying data associated with the selected item from the image includes processing the [[image]] universal product code with a UPC recognition program to produce a

first output and processing the text with an optical character recognition program to produce the identifying data a second output.

30. (Currently amended) An integrated portable apparatus for obtaining item information for a selected item available for purchase at a location of a first retail entity, the apparatus comprising:

an input device for capturing configured to capture an image that contains multiple instances of identifying data associated with the selected item as provided by the first retail entity;

an output device for outputting item information for the selected item as obtained from a second retail entity that is different than the first retail entity;

a storage medium for storing said identifying data and program instructions for processing the image; and

a processing unit communicatively coupled to the input device, the output device, and the storage medium, for executing the program instructions that process the image by:

~~obtaining the item information for the selected item by communicating the image containing the multiple instances of identifying data directly to a server operated by the second retail entity, wherein the selected item is available for purchase from the second retail entity;~~

receiving, directly from the server of the second retail entity, item information for multiple items that result from conflicting identifying data obtained from the image; and

~~outputting on the output device the item information obtained directly from the server of the second retail entity for the multiple items, wherein the output device communicates the item information to a user while the user remains at the location of the first retail entity.~~

31. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the processing unit further executes program instructions that process the image by extracting the multiple instances of identifying data from the image using a data recognition procedure that produces an output.

32. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 31, wherein at least one instance of the identifying data is barcode data and the processing unit extracts the barcode data by executing a barcode recognition program that operates on the image.

33. (Currently amended) The apparatus of Claim 31, wherein at least one instance of the identifying data is text data and the processing unit extracts the text data by executing an optical character recognition program that operates on the image.

34. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the processing unit communicates the image to the server operated by the second retail entity at a location remote from the first retail entity for the server to extract the identifying data from the image.

35. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the item information for the selected item is obtained by retrieving item information from a database maintained on behalf of the second retail entity, wherein the item information corresponds to the identifying data for the selected item.

36. (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising judging a quality of the output of each of the data recognition procedures and using the best identifying data to obtain the item information.

37. (New) The method of Claim 1, further comprising polling the user to determine the correct identifying data for the selected item if the output of the data recognition procedures results in conflicting identifying data.

38. (New) The method of Claim 1, wherein if the data recognition procedures output conflicting identifying data, the method further comprises obtaining item information for all of the items identified by the output of the data recognition procedures.